

APPENDIX I



[Home](#) [Site Map](#) [Search](#) [Glossary](#) [Contact Us](#) [Help](#) [Printer friendly](#)

Specific Cancers : [Gallbladder cancer](#) : [Treating gallbladder cancer](#)

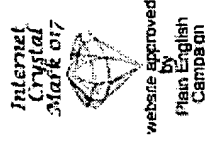
Menu for this topic



The stages of gallbladder cancer

This page is about the stages of gallbladder cancer. You can scroll down the page to read all the information here. Or you can use these links to go straight down the page to sections on

- [What is staging?](#)
- [The different staging systems](#) doctors use
- [TNM stages](#) of gallbladder cancer
- [The number stages](#) of gallbladder cancer



What is staging?

The stage of a cancer tells the doctor how far a cancer has grown or spread. It is important because the stage often decides the treatment. The tests and scans that your doctor does when diagnosing your cancer will give some information about the stage. But your doctor may not be able to tell you the exact stage until you have surgery.

Different staging systems

There are different ways of staging cancers. The two main ways are the

TNM system and number systems. Sometimes the stage of your cancer may sound a bit confusing. You are unlikely to be as familiar with these terms as your doctor is. If you do not feel you understand what stage your cancer is and would like to know more, ask your doctor. Understanding your staging may help you understand why your doctors have chosen a particular treatment for you. There is a list of questions for your doctor at the end of this section that may help you. Also, there is more about staging cancers in the About Cancer section of CancerHelp UK.

TNM stages of cancer of the gallbladder

'TNM' stands for Tumour, Node, and Metastasis. The system can describe

- The size of a primary tumour (T)
- Whether there are lymph nodes containing cancer cells (N)
- Whether the cancer has spread to a different part of the body (M)

There are 5 stages of tumour size in the current TNM classification: T1 – T4 and a very early stage called Tis or carcinoma in situ.

Tis (carcinoma in situ) is the earliest possible stage of gallbladder cancer. There are cancer cells there. But they are all inside the lining of the gallbladder wall. Because of this, the cancer cannot have spread. Gallbladder cancers are rarely found this early. This is only likely if you have had your gallbladder removed for other reasons (gallstones for example).

T1 means the tumour has started to grow into the wall of the gallbladder. T1 is divided into 2 further groups, T1a and T1b. T1a means that the cancer has grown into the connective tissue layer

underneath the lining of the gallbladder wall. T1b means that the cancer has started to grow into the muscle layer underneath this connective tissue layer.

T2 means the cancer is still contained in the gallbladder but it has grown through the muscle layer of the wall into the connective tissue underneath. It has not spread to lymph nodes or other organs.

T3 means the cancer has grown right through the gallbladder wall. It may have begun to grow into other body tissues surrounding the gallbladder or into a nearby organ, such as the liver.

T4 means the cancer has either grown more than 2 cm into the liver or has grown into other nearby organs as well, such as the pancreas, small intestine and stomach.

N stages of gallbladder cancer

There are 3 main stages of lymph node involvement in cancer of the larynx

- N0 means there are no lymph nodes containing cancer cells
- N1 means there are cancer cells in one or more lymph nodes very close to the gallbladder
- N2 means there are cancer cells in one or more lymph nodes further away from the gallbladder

M stages of gallbladder cancer

There are two M stages of gallbladder cancer

- M0 means there is no cancer spread
- M1 means the cancer has spread to another part of the body far away from the gallbladder, such as the brain or lungs (you may hear

your doctor call this distant metastasis)

Together the T, N and M stages provide a complete description of the stage of your cancer. As an example, if you have a T3, N0, M0 cancer, you have a tumour that is affecting more than one area of your gallbladder and has spread just outside the gallbladder, but the lymph nodes are clear and there is no spread of your cancer to other parts of the body. Using this type of stage grouping, doctors may then simply call these a stage 3 cancer of the gallbladder.

Number stages of cancer of the gallbladder

There are four main stages in this system – stages 1 to 4. Some doctors also refer to stage 0.

Stage 0 or Carcinoma in situ (CIS)

If you have CIS or stage 0 cancer of the gallbladder, you have a very, very early stage cancer. There are cancer cells only in the layer of tissue lining your gallbladder. Some doctors may not regard this as a true cancer because the cancer cells are confined to the lining and cannot move about. So there is very little risk of the cancer having spread. It is unusual for gallbladder cancer to be found this early, as there are few or no symptoms at this stage. It is sometimes picked up this early when someone has their gallbladder removed for gallstones.

Stage 1

This is the earliest stage of invasive cancer. It means that cancer is only in the top layers of the tissues lining the gallbladder or in only one small part of the gallbladder. It has not spread to nearby tissues, lymph nodes or other organs. Stage 1 is the same as T1, N0, M0 in the TNM stages.

Stage 2

This means that cancer has grown at least into the muscle layer of the gallbladder wall. In stage 2, the cancer has not spread to other organs. Stage 2 in the TNM stages is the same as T2, N0, M0.

Stage 3

The cancer has grown right through the wall of the gallbladder. It may also have spread to nearby lymph nodes and into the body tissues next to the gallbladder. Stage 3 in the TNM stages is the same as

- T1, 2 or 3, N1, M1 or
- T3, N0, M1

Stage 4

This means that the cancer is advanced and has spread to distant lymph nodes and other parts of the body such as the stomach or the pancreas. Stage 4 is the same as any T4, any N2, or any M1 in the TNM stages.

Sometimes your doctor may use an even simpler staging system to make decisions about what treatment to give you. You may hear your doctor refer to one of the following three stages

- Localised (stage 1 and 2) - the cancer is contained within the gallbladder and can be removed with surgery.
- Unresectable (stage 3 and 4) - the cancer has spread to tissue outside of the gallbladder and it cannot all be removed with surgery. It is possible to remove some stage 3 cancers so they won't all be put in this group
- Recurrent - the cancer has come back after your first lot of treatment. It can come back in the gallbladder but may also be in other organs of the body.

